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E.O. 12065, Sec. 1-204

MB 30-119 #1

By DJH Date 1/18/81

June 25, 1959

MEMORANDUM OF CONFERENCE WITH THE PRESIDENT  
June 24, 1959

Others present: Secretary Herter  
General Goodpaster



Secretary Herter said that he is not concerned as much about the problems that might arise in West Berlin requiring "contingency" actions as about the effect of indirect pressures on the city. The President agreed and said that one of the things that has weighed heavily on his mind is that the Communists could put a kind of cordon around the city, causing progressively atrophy, widespread unemployment, etc. This is a nagging fact in the background of all of our consideration of this problem.

Mr. Herter next showed the President a suggested reply to Macmillan's last letter to the President, which he described as avoiding very much substantive content. He also showed the President a draft that has been prepared in State of a possible "communique" for issuance at the end of the next Foreign Ministers meeting, stating how far the West might go toward accommodation. The President thought he would like to go a little further in his answer to Macmillan. Mr. Herter said that although the draft communique has been put together, the State Department is still split regarding the basic idea of a moratorium. Some think it will be taken as a surrender of principle by the West. Others take the view that if we do not have an agreement with some kind of time element in it, the Soviets will sign a treaty with East Germany and leave us to do whatever we can.

Mr. Herter stated that a moratorium of a couple of years would take us beyond the British and German elections which are very much on our minds. The President, after reading the draft communique, said if the Foreign Ministers were to agree on something like this,

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E.O. 12065, Sec. 1-301 (b)(d)

NSC letter 1/5/81

FILE Date 1/19/81

he thought we would have the basis for a summit meeting. Mr. Herter said that the thinking in the communique runs parallel to the British thinking, although it is stiffer than they would prefer to be. However, there will be a very considerable problem with the French and the Germans about it. Also, he repeated, the State Department is not itself completely agreed on the matter. The President commented that if the British won't stand with us in keeping West Berlin and West Germany secure, then their action essentially leaves us alone to adopt a "fortress America" posture.

Mr. Herter said he wanted to note particularly two points in the communique. First, it protects Western access to the civilian population of Berlin. The second is a military question, whether we will be in better or worse relationship to the Soviets than now at a time two or three years in the future, when the matter would come up again. Discussion on this point was not conclusive. The President commented on the vulnerable situation in which the West finds itself in West Berlin -- through being so subject to Soviet pressures.

Mr. Herter said the Soviets keep stressing that the specific time set is not a matter of importance or principle, but is intended simply to keep the present situation from dragging on indefinitely. He said Von Brentano had indicated that he personally would accept an arrangement such as Mr. Herter was describing, although it is by no means so sure regarding Adenauer. Sooner or later Mr. Herter felt the Germans themselves will have to find the answer to their reunification. Regarding the document, the President stated that if Couve de Murville and Von Brentano would agree to it, it seemed to hold promise. The time factor becomes simply one of scheduling a further meeting to consider the situation. Technically, Governor Herter said he did not suggest laying the proposal on the table at once, since the Soviets would think we had a further "fall back" position. He said the essential point is to make clear that the time factor is employed in the sense of a moratorium rather than an ultimatum. The President saw value in this, since he thought the West and the East cannot wholly compose their differences now. They will have to take a longer time, and adopt measures which give a start toward resolution of the difficulties.

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Mr. Herter commented that the Soviets, in complaining about "subversive" activities in West Berlin, have never mentioned the flight of refugees to the West. They seem to be embarrassed about this.



A. J. Goodpaster  
Brigadier General, USA

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